

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**Task Force on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education**  
September 13, 1999 - 9:00 a.m. - Room 405 State Capitol

**Members Present:**

Sen. Howard A Stephenson, Chair  
Rep. Tammy J. Rowan, Chair  
Sen. Karen Hale  
Sen. L. Steven Poulton  
Rep. Jeff Alexander  
Rep. Kevin S. Garn  
Rep. Karen W. Morgan  
Rep. LaWanna "Lou" Shurtliff  
Jill Kennedy  
Kim Burningham  
Linda B. Ogden  
Ila Rose Fife

**Members Absent:**

Lt. Gov. Olene S. Walker

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Bryant R. Howe,  
Research Analyst  
Mr. James Wilson, Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Wendy Bangerter, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

**1. Task Force Business --**

Kim Burningham explained that the state now has an accreditation system that is conducted on most secondary and a few elementary schools. He suggested that this task force should strengthen the existing accreditation system rather than create an entirely new structure.

Supt. Steve Laing explained that the local schools complete a process with an organization called Northwest Accreditation Association and follows their guidelines in order to be considered accredited. He reviewed the process each school must complete annually and another process every six years.

Rep. Rowan suggested that may be a good vehicle for the accountability program. And that she would add it to the next agenda for discussion.

**2. Review and Discussion of Utah Conference on Learning Standards and Accountability in Public Education --**Sen. Stephenson lead a discussion of the review of the Utah Conference on Learning Standards and Accountability.

Rep. Shurtliff responded that she came away with more questions than answers. She noted that others states have taken a long time to implement an accountability program and expressed concern that Utah may be wanting to proceed too fast. She noted that Rep. Frandsen's bill implemented a level of accountability. She also noted that most teachers feel the core curriculum is too overwhelming to teach in its entirety.

Rep. Rowan responded that the ground work (legislation) needs to be put in place, but then there would need to be a three-to-five year phase-in period.

It was noted that the mandate to teach the entire core has been in place since 1984.

Sen. Stephenson stated that the TIMSS Report showed the United States to be below other nations in math and science core curriculum. He got the impression that the difference is that all concepts are taught every year, where in other countries, each concept is taught in more depth at specific times in a student's education.

Mr. Laing stated that as long as the national testing reflects the wide expanded concepts, it would not be possible to test with more narrow, norm referenced tests.

Ms. Bonnie Morgan, Director of Curriculum, State Office of Education, responded that the redevelopment of the math curriculum will cost about \$100,000. She explained that the science core was based on the depth model rather than breadth. She stated that Utah does not appropriate funds for curriculum development, but her office uses other funding such as those allocated for conventions and workshops.

Ms. Ila Rose Fife stated she heard many say how critical it is to develop the ground work and also to involve the public. She spoke in favor of proceeding slower and having more focus meetings with the districts and the public.

Ms. Linda Ogden stated the need for collaboration between state, local boards, and the Legislature and for legislation to provide adequate funding for the state to work with a broad curriculum, allowing the local districts to fine tune it.

Mr. Burningham suggested that revising the curriculum is an on-going process. He observed from the conference various approaches to accountability and determined that Utah needs to decide who it is that is being made accountable.

Rep. Shurtliff stated that the core curriculum needs to be focused for each grade. She emphasized the need to make it palatable to the education community. She stated that it takes funding and good marketing.

Mr. Gary Carlston commented that the core curriculum needs to be revised. It is also important that sub item test scores be reported to students and teachers. He stated that Utah is well positioned to do that.

Sen. Stephenson stated that even though we already have some good indicators, we should use other indicators as well. He feels the more indicators there are, the more accountable districts will be and that schools also need to be held accountable.

Rep. Rowan felt the conference was helpful and successful. She expressed the need for better marketing and getting a message out to education community. She encouraged the task force members to study the information that was given at the conference.

**3. Review of Sanctions Included in Other State's Accountability Programs** –James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel Mr. Wilson reviewed rewards and interventions being used by other states. He noted some states have included them as state law and some use them on the local levels. He also noted that some are very specific, but that Texas's is very specific and lengthy. He commented that rewards have not been specific about a dollar amount because it has to be appropriated by their Legislatures. He stated that it will take funding to gather resources required to intervene from the state level to bring local boards and schools up to standard.

**4. Recess to Subcommittees** -- The task force members divided into two groups for specific discussion. One group lead by Sen. Stephenson discussed the elements of accountability plans. The group lead by Rep. Rowan discussed rewards and consequences.

Rewards and Consequences – Room 403 -- Chaired by Rep. Rowan

Members Present:

Sen. Hale

Sen. Poulton

Rep. Shurtliff

Jill Kennedy

Ila Rose Fife

Rep. Alexander

Staff Present: Jim Wilson and Wendy Bangerter

Discussion included the following comments:

- C Monetary rewards should go to the school and teacher, not to the district.
- C Competition in schools can be good, but it can also be devastating to a school's morale.
- C Don't want monetary rewards to discourage teachers from going into at-risk schools.
- C Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the only existing program using monetary rewards. Their work plan is helpful to study, it contains some indicators, that would help develop standards.
- C Career Ladder program became very divisive in schools. Often recognition is enough.

- C It does not help to lower the standard. Competition can act as a motivator.
- C Teachers do better when they collaborate grade to grade. Whole-school reform is critical.
- C There are a number of varied approaches to rewards nationwide.
- C Funding will be needed. Would be better to first intervene and then reward.
- C Once standards and accountability are set in place, it will be easier to see what funding is needed.
- C Financial rewards should be at secondary level to see if base system has worked.
- C The curriculum needs to be in place with more assessment before rewards and intervention can be utilized.
- C Schools need to succeed as a whole or fail as a whole.
- C Focus groups could be helpful.
- C Clear, reachable standards are necessary. Current core is too expansive.
- C Shore up infrastructure.
- C State should not micro-manage.
- C Teachers are more motivated by the success of their students than when they are judged better than another teacher.
- C The Legislatures needs to be able to trust districts and local boards.

Subcommittee on Elements of Accountability Plans -- Room 405 -- Chaired by Sen. Stephenson

Members Present:

Sen. Stephenson  
Rep. Morgan  
Rep. Garn  
Kim Burningham  
Linda Ogden

Staff Present:

Bryant Howe

Senator Stephenson welcome the members of the subcommittee. He noted that based on his notes from the Utah Conference on Standards and Accountability, the following elements could be part of an accountability plan.

With regards to a "high stakes" accountability system, the following elements could be included:

1. Some type of "grading" system for schools. This could be a letter grade, or some other type of designation such as exemplary, recognized, acceptable, and low performing.
2. Assessments to be used could include the Criterion Referenced Tests and Stanford 9, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores.
3. Disaggregate
4. Cut Scores
5. Gains
6. ACT by school/district scores and enrollments
7. CRT - Reading  
Writing  
Math  
Algebra  
Geometry  
Science  
Social Studies

Sen. Stephenson noted that some of the following elements could also be publically reported:

1. Low level courses;
2. Grades -- by school;
3. Discipline;
4. Parent teacher conference rates;
5. SEOP participation rates;
6. Volunteer hours;
7. Dropout - graduation rates;
8. Absenteeism -- students and teachers;
9. Special Education participation rates;
10. AP -- concurrent enrollment rates;
11. Class size;
12. Library circulation;
13. Books read and tested for comprehension;
14. End social promotion by third grade;
15. ESL, poverty, single parents;
16. Student mobility;
17. Track mobile students; and
18. Staff qualification: length of service; major in subject areas.

In addition, Leslye Arsht, from StandardsWork, and a speaker at the Utah Conference on Learning Standards and Accountability, noted that there are other data indicators that every state

should track. These indicators have all been tied in one way or another to improved student achievement:

1. Enrollments in higher level courses. Is the percent of students taking higher level courses going up? When more students take higher level courses, overall student performance improves. At the same time these percentages should be going up, enrollments in lower level courses should be going down. In fact, we believe that lower-level courses should be eliminated.
2. Students reading on grade level. States need to set goals and then move hard in this area. Students need to master reading by the third grade. If reading is not mastered by the third grade, it is very hard to catch up, and the student falls further behind in other subjects.
3. Trend lines on standardized tests. Consider trends over time for SAT, ACT, and AP tests, not just the absolute scores. You want the percent of students taking the tests and the number of students passing the AP tests to be going up. These are important measures of overall improvements in student achievement.
4. Achievement gaps. A lot of achievement gap is the result of a lot of students getting unequal content. Examine achievement gaps by gender, race, and socioeconomic status. This will help you focus on where improvements need to be made.
5. Acceptance levels at four year post secondary schools. States should also track whether students are taking remedial courses when they get to college. Too many colleges are saying that they are spending too much time remediating students who didn't learn what they needed to learn, when they needed to learn it.
6. Dropout rates. They should be measured a year at a time, but the desired data is "what's the drop out rate from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade." Students do not leave schools that are challenging them. When the dropout rate is too high, that is a failure for the school.
7. Extreme or chronic absenteeism. Don't consider average daily attendance, even the worse schools will show up at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. Look at chronic absenteeism -- students who are absent 10 or more days a year. Students who aren't in school don't learn and students who aren't in school a lot don't learn a lot. These students need attention.

8. Special education rates. More students are being moved into the special education category as a way of opting out of state tests. This is a troubling sign. States should closely monitor this.

Barbara Lawrence, Director of Testing and Evaluation, Utah State Office of Education, noted that the process of performance standard setting is done instrument by instrument. Standards vary across content of course and what it is that students should learn. Definitions of what constitutes "acceptable performance" will also vary by grade. She stated that the inclusion of the public in the content standard setting process ensures representation and accountability and gives public assurance that we are not "dumbing" the test down.

Linda Ogden suggested that the task force stay away from the letter-grading system. It doesn't really mean anything and she would like to see another terminology used.

Dr. Ronnekamp, Superintendent, Granite School District questioned if we apply more pressure for performance, will there be, over time, a tendency towards more students dropping out? This should be a concern and drop-out rate trends should also be included in an accountability plan. The students moving to alternative placements, thereby having expectations dropped, should also be closely monitored.

Barbara Lawrence noted that there are federal requirements for IDEA students and that the system must allow for schools to comply with federal law. There are options for alternative assessment for students who cannot participate in the general curriculum. Schools need to understand that they are still required to comply with the federal law. She also noted that with disaggregation of data, that there must be a minimum number of students that fall into a reported category before the data is publicly reported. We should only disaggregate data that is easily assessable, such as race, ethnicity, income, and English as a second language.

The subcommittee noted that collection of data in a uniform matter is important. Common definitions should be used across all districts in order to have accurate comparability.

Rep. Garn stated that we need the ability to track the individual progress of each student. This is perhaps best done at the district level and should not be mandated by the state.

Barbara Lawrence noted that the "cut levels" on the performance standard setting process show what part of the curriculum students are or are not mastering.

Sen. Stephenson asked what should be done if a student tests below grade level two or three years in a row. Barbara Lawrence said that there needs to be a way to target students who need

additional help. He noted that if we move to a high stakes arena, children with the greatest needs will have a greater incentive to learn than they do now. Reporting data will help improve performance.

Supt. Ronnenkamp said that our focus needs to be on helping the teacher in the classroom. Lots of data gathering is a worry and we shouldn't spend money on the data gathering and not spending time and money with the students.

Dr. Darlene Robless, Superintendent, Salt Lake City School District, said that her district already collects demographic data. She wants to make sure that we are giving tools to help students. However, none of this will happen without additional time, data, and resources. We can analyze the data and then make some interventions, but staff has to have additional time to make the improvements.

**5. Reconvene Full Task Force --**Sen. Stephenson reviewed the discussion of his subgroup, the elements of accountability plans, which included:

- C Grading vs. labeling
- C NAEP is a good indicator
- C The CRT should be reported by school, as well as the SAT. The district could determine if it should be reported by class.
- C Reward gains toward standard
- C Reporting of other non-high-stakes information
- C Districts would need ability to collect data of other indicators. Common definitions are critical. Other indicators include: volunteer hours, drop-out and graduations rates, absenteeism, student rates, unique assessments for poor test takers, class size, library circulation, # of books in the library, books read, # of words read and comprehended, English as a second language, poverty, student mobility and tracking moving students, staff qualifications.
- C Ending social promotions
- C Expand CRT's with algebra and geometry

They determined reporting should be kept broad, but uniform, so comparisons could be made school-to-school and district-to-district. They also discussed the need for additional collection ability and resources.

Rep. Rowan summarized the discussion in her group.

#### Rewards

- C Acknowledgment and recognition should be the first step.
- C Interventions for low-performing and struggling schools.



- C Rewards would be based on a whole-school level.
- C Rewards would be given to schools and the school would have the flexibility to determine how it is spent.
- C The infrastructure must be in place including: teacher development, current core, and current standards.
- C Follow examples of Twenty-first Century schools and learn from their experiences.

Intervention

- C Begin as close to the school level as possible.
- C Let districts try first to help the school before the state steps in.
- C Don't give schools money for failing, but provide support, staff, programs, and materials with multifaceted incentives.

**6. Other Business** - Rep. Rowan suggested ways to reach out to the public and gather their input. She asked if the task force would be interested in participating in the Utah Education Association (UEA) convention.

**MOTION:** Rep. Shurtliff moved that the task force participate in the UEA Convention in the best way possible. The motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Rowan suggested that Legislators and others involved hold focus groups around the state at different intervals. It was suggested that focus groups could collaborate with board meetings, mid-winter conferences, the PTA conference in October, district meetings, and at education services districts.

**MOTION:** Sen. Poulton moved that task force members participate in focus groups around the state. The motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Sen. Poulton moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously at 12:05 p.m.

